

Botond Csuka: Aesthetic Experience, Improvement, and Providence: The “Exercise Model” in the British Enlightenment
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The paper examines how “exercise” – the medico-scientific discourse on physical exercise in particular – served as a model for the emerging concept of aesthetic experience in the British Enlightenment. Revisiting Addison’s essays and its reverberations in various aesthetic theories, the paper argues that the aesthetic was seen as an experience that not only actively *engages* various human capacities but also *improves* them for certain beneficial purposes. The benefits of the “exercise model” were manifold: it could be utilized to argue for the *therapeutic* and *transformative power* of aesthetic experience, concerning somatic well-being, moral culture, and social cohesion. Based on the reassessment of the role of the Providential Order in the British Enlightenment, the paper claims that the “exercise model” is an important modification of Paul Guyer’s Kantian “play model” because the aesthetic experience was far from being a “free play” in the British Enlightenment. It functioned as an “exercise” that could develop human sensibility in accordance with the providential design, which made the aesthetic an integral part of the general endeavour of the Enlightenment: “improvement.”